

6 DEC 1971

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**HONDURAS:****Easy Giveaway**

Three guano-steeped, lizard-infested specks in the western Caribbean, the Swan Islands (population: 12) cannot even be found on most maps. Nearly a hundred miles off the Honduran coast, the islets served as a lair for pirates in the seventeenth century and as a CIA monitoring station in the 1960s.\* But once the CIA dismantled its operation there a few years ago, the U.S.—which first laid claim to the islands in Lincoln's day—had little use for its minuscule possessions. And so, last week, hoping to earn some goodwill in Latin America, the U.S. ceded the Swans to Honduras, which has long claimed title to them.

To at least one American, Sumner Smith of Lincoln, Mass., the treaty of cession (which must be ratified by the U.S. Senate) came as a bitter blow. For the 82-year-old Smith, who owned a commercial enterprise on the islands, claims they belong to him. "I guess the U.S. is trying to impress Latin America," his son Sumner Smith Jr., said last week. "And it is an easy thing to give away."

\*Among other things, the CIA-run Radio Swan broadcast coded messages to the invading Cuban exiles during the Bay of Pigs episode.

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## HONDURAS

## Swans, Spooks and Boobies

Henry Kissinger excepted, White House aides do not normally rate elaborate receptions abroad. But when Presidential Counsellor Robert H. Finch reached Honduras last week on the fifth leg of a six-nation Latin American tour, he was received royally.

Because of Hurricane Laura, Finch's plane was diverted from Tegucigalpa, the capital, to San Pedro Sula. No matter. Honduran President Ramón Ernesto Cruz, accompanied by his entire Cabinet and several cases of vintage champagne, hurried to Honduras' second city to meet Finch there. During a two-hour layover, the reason for all the hospitality became clear. Finch and Cruz signed an agreement under which Washington will cede to Honduras two Caribbean islands that have been U.S. possessions for more than a century.

Great Swan and Little Swan, 97 miles off the Honduran coast, together cover scarcely three square miles. Little Swan is uninhabited; the larger island is used principally as an air-navigation and weather-reporting station. Its population consists of a U.S. Federal Aviation Agency technician, four weathermen and 16 civilians, most of them related in a four-generation link to the island's thrice-married elder, Captain Donald Glidden, 79, a Cayman Islander who settled on Swan in 1927. There are also innumerable booby birds, notable for their droppings, which for centuries have been used as fertilizer.

After Columbus. The Swans may have been visited in 1502 by Columbus, who was making his fourth voyage in search of that elusive passage to the East Indies. Later expeditions established Spain's claim to them. Because there is no water on the islands, they were usually bypassed. In 1856, however, the U.S. passed the Guano Islands Act, which enabled it to pre-empt any unclaimed islands on which bird droppings or guano abounded. Under that proviso, Washington claimed Great and Little Swan in 1863.

Great Swan became a weather station in 1914, but it was 1960 before the real Swan song began. A New York company called Gibraltar Steamship Corp., which owned no steamships, set up shop on the island with a 50,000-watt transmitter. Gibraltar, of course, was a CIA cover, and Radio Swan was soon booming propaganda to Fidel Castro's Cuba, 350 miles away. It called Castro and his lieutenants "pigs with beards" and accused Brother Raúl Castro of

being "a queer with effeminate friends." In reply, Havana Radio called Swan "a cage of hysterical parrots."

Look to the Rainbow. Before the Bay of Pigs assault began in 1961, Radio Swan beamed coded messages like "Look well at the rainbow. The fish will rise very soon. Chico is in the house. Visit him." After the attack failed, Swan was gradually phased out of the spook business and used instead for weather reports and sending navigation signals. The U.S. eventually decided that the islands could be safely given away. For Honduras, which has claimed them since 1923, Swan has long been a symbol of Yankee imperialism. In 1961 a boatload of students sailed out to plant the Honduran flag on Great Swan. Invited ashore, they flew their flag, stayed for sandwiches and beer, and then sailed home.

The U.S. Senate is expected to ratify last week's agreement by next spring. After that Honduras will leave things as they are on Swan. The U.S. technicians will remain, as will Glidden and his family. But another potential—though minor—international flash point has been damped down. Raising his glass in a toast last week, President Cruz remarked that Washington had been wise to give up the Swans. If it had not, he hinted with a straight face, Honduras would have had to resort to force.

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U.S. MINI-CRISIS

STATINTL

## Swan Islands His, 81-Year-Old Claims

By JEREMIAH O'LEARY  
Star Staff Writer

At the State Department on this Thanksgiving Day they are being thankful that, while the world's major crises remain the only new crisis is a tiny one.

The mini-crisis of the day involves the outrage of Sumner Smith, 81, of Lincoln, Mass., against the U.S. government for giving away "his" island to Honduras. His islands, Smith says, three islets called the Swan Islands, located about 100 miles off the Atlantic coast of Honduras.

A government source today admitted the give-away readily enough, since it was done in broad daylight earlier this week before a large crowd at San Pedro Sula, Honduras, by White House counsellor Robert H. Finch.

But the government says they are not Smith's islands.

### Payments Stopped

"We decided about five years ago that the Smith family did not have title to Swan," said a government authority, "and we stopped paying on the lease at that time."

Smith said he took possession of the archipelago in 1930 for debts owed him by a guano-collecting company. He said the government paid him \$300 a year for use of Swan's sandy terrain, once as a CIA radio station broadcasting propaganda to Cuba and also as a weather station.

The islands in the group are Greater Swan, Lesser Swan and Bobby Cay, both of more

interest to sea turtles and birds than to most people.

But the islands are of great interest to Honduras, which claimed them through terms of a patrimony handed down from Columbus and Spain. President Nixon decided to have Finch give them to Honduras as a goodwill gesture to Latin America.

### Guano Act Cited

Smith said he is good and mad at the U.S. government. Yet the government, apparently unworried despite the need for Senate ratification of the transaction, says the Guano Act of 1856 gives the President the right to claim any islands discovered by American citizens in search of bird-droppings useful for fertilizer.

If this is so, Smith wants to know, how come the government ever paid him for the lease? He figures the lease constituted recognition of his ownership, which derives from his father's part-ownership in the Swan Islands Co.

"Now they've given the islands away," said Smith. "They've come along and kicked us the hell out," he said from Lincoln.

Smith tried to press the matter by court suit last year, but a Federal judge ruled for the United States. The chances are that the Honduran flag will be fluttering over the reefs and sand of the Swan Islands before Smith could get another case going.

Anyway at the State Department today, more people are preoccupied with turkeys than swans.

# U.S. Agrees to Cede 2 Islets to Honduras

## Three Square Miles of the Caribbean

By RICHARD SEVERO

Special to The New York Times

### SWAN ISLANDS, Honduras

—They were discovered by Columbus in 1509, infested by pirates 200 years later, prized by guano hunters, cultivated by the United Fruit Company, ravaged by hurricane, claimed by a sea captain and a farmer from Massachusetts and by others now forgotten, not to mention at least three countries.

With all that, the Swan Islands remain obscure in a sea of green and blue and pink. They do not appear on most maps.

The islands, Greater Swan, Lesser Swan and a reef called Bobby Cay, lie about 100 miles north of Honduras and are less than 400 miles from Cuba. Their total area is about three square miles.

But their acquisition is a point of honor for Honduras. The nation decided in 1921 that when Columbus stopped at the Swan Islands, reportedly to pick up wood, he made them a part of the Spanish colonial empire, of which Honduras was a part. Honduras claimed the islands, which had been United States possessions since the middle of the 19th century.

It took nearly 50 years for Honduras to convince the United States, seeking to improve its image in Latin America, is convinced.

However, with the agreement of Honduras, the United States plans to keep five Americans on the island. They operate a weather station that tracks tropical storms.

To Donald Glidden, a Swan Islander, this boils down to a question of security. Captain Don, as he is called by the islanders, is 79 years old. He is a powerful, deeply tanned man with white hair and eyes that match the Caribbean sky he has lived under all his life.

"Well, I think it's going to be all right," he said in the soft, dancing English of the Cayman Islands he left 44 years ago. His tremendous hands pushed a needle through thick sailor's canvas.

"You know," he said, "I been caretaker here and I been a man in my time." He talked of the day a British cruiser anchored off Bobby Cay and its captain, a man named Amos Smith, announced that he would raise the Union Jack.

Captain Don said he had told the man "no" and the man went away. Eleven years ago, he shoosed off some Honduran students who had come out from the mainland in a small boat to raise the Honduran flag.

Captain Don is married, for the third time. His first two wives died. He has eight children, about 30 grandchildren (he can't remember exactly, he says) and eight great-grandchildren. Many of the islanders are related to him.

He says he owes allegiance not to Britain, the United States or Honduras, but to Sumner Smith, who lives on a 300-acre farm in Lincoln, Mass.

Mr. Smith, who is 81, insists that he owned Greater Swan until the United States took it away from him "without even a thank-you." The title issue is far from clear.

Mr. Smith says that a company in which his father had an interest, the Swan Island

Commercial Company, took title to the islands from Capt. Alonzo Adams, who sailed out of Mobile, Ala., in 1893 and came upon Greater Swan by accident.

The Swan Island Commercial Company leased part of the island to the United Fruit Company, which planted several thousand coconut trees. The venture was not profitable and United Fruit pulled out.

In the early nineteen-fifties, the United States was paying Sumner Smith \$300 a year in rent for a weather station he had allowed the Government to build. For a time, he also got some rent out of a radio station, said to be financed by the Central Intelligence Agency, which broadcast anti-Communist messages to Cuba during the nineteen-sixties.

But one day Mr. Smith received a letter from the United States Government. It said the United States was taking sovereignty.

The United States claim apparently dates back to a visit to the islands of George V. White in the early eighteen-fifties. He landed there in the name of the United States. For years later, an American company that he had formed exported guano from the islands, for use as fertilizer.

The United States has since then based its claim to the islands on the Guano Act of 1856, which provided that American citizens who discovered the accumulated bird droppings on unclaimed islands could collect the guano.

Under the same act, the President was empowered to claim the islands as American property. Secretary of State William Seward did so in the name of President Lincoln in 1863.

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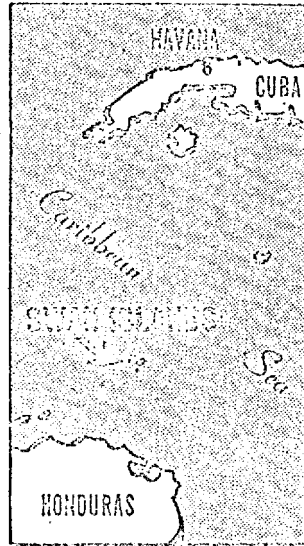
# Honduras Gets Islands Once Used by the CIA

By Herald Wire Services

**SAN PEDRO SULA, Honduras** — The Swan Islands, tiny, windswept sand spits in the western Caribbean that served as a focal point for U.S. cloak-and-dagger activity in the early 1960s, were officially turned over to Honduras Monday, ending a century-old charge of U.S. encroachment.

Robert Finch, as President Nixon's special emissary to Latin America, signed for the United States at the formal ceremony in this northern Honduran industrial city. He was joined by President Ramon Ernesto Cruz, who signed for Honduras.

"It is a great matter of principle for my country," Honduran Foreign Minister Andres Alvarado Puerto said. "It shows to the world what a great nation the United States is because the world's greatest power has recognized the legitimate claim of



Swan Islands  
...long disputed

one of the small nations of the world."

FINCH ARRIVED here, the fifth stop on his six-nation tour, from Brazil. He was to

go to Mexico from Honduras. Accompanying Finch are White House Director of Communications Herb Klein and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Charles A. Meyer.

The Swan Islands are inhabited by about 40 persons, among them five Americans who operate a weather and aircraft navigation station. The United States will continue to run these facilities. The total land area of the three islands in the group is about three square miles.

They also served as the site of a Central Intelligence Agency radio station broadcasting to Cuba during and after the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and later to other points in Latin America.

THE CHICAGO Sun-Times reported Sunday that the final disposition of the station, and whether it will be used again by the CIA, will be subject to negotiations.

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## A guano island

Honduras wins  
secret CIA base

By Thomas B. Ross

Sun-Times Bureau

WASHINGTON — After a decade as a center of U.S. cloak-and-dagger activities, a tiny island of bird droppings in the Caribbean is about to be returned to Honduras.

Reliable diplomatic sources said presidential assistant Robert H. Finch will formally give up U.S. claim to the island during his one-day visit to Honduras Monday.

The island, Swan Island, about 100 miles north of Honduras, is composed entirely of guano, the accumulated droppings of sea fowl. It has served as the sight of a covert Central Intelligence Agency radio station broadcasting to Cuba during and after the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and later to other points in Latin America.

The sources indicated that final disposition of the station, and whether it will be used again by the CIA, will be subject to further negotiations.

## Claimed in 1863

The United States has claimed the island since 1863 under the Guano Act of 1865 which gave the President the right to designate an unclaimed island as U.S. territo-

ry once an American citizen had discovered guano on it.

The New York Guano Co. was first licensed to collect and sell the island's guano, a valuable fertilizer rich in phosphates. Later an Alabama sea captain and finally the United Fruit Co. set up operations on the island.

The commercial interests were followed by the Weather Bureau, the Federal Aviation Administration and eventually the CIA.

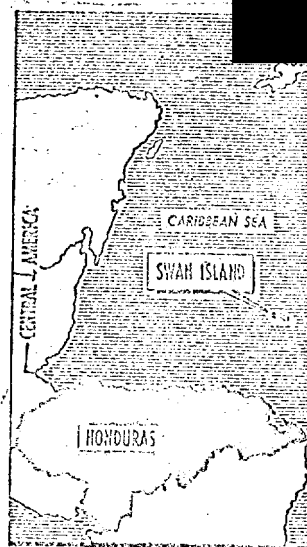
The CIA station originally operated as Radio Swan, which, in addition to political broadcasts, put out a variety of popular programs including one featuring a Cuban exile called Havana Rose.

## 'Hysterical parrots'

During the Bay of Pigs invasion, Radio Swan was on the air 24 hours a day, transmitting coded messages and mysterious orders to nonexistent battalions.

Havana Radio set up a counterbarrage, denouncing Radio Swan as "not a radio station but a cage of hysterical parrots."

After the invasion failed, the CIA station was renamed Radio Americas and continued



broadcasts to Cuba, Mexico, Central America and the upper tier of South America.

Shortly after the CIA established itself on Swan Island, a group of armed Honduran students sought to land on the island by force in 1960. They were repulsed singlehandedly by the weather bureau's cook but, after agreeing to lay down their arms, they were permitted to land, sing the Honduran national anthem and temporarily plant their flag.

## Protest in UN

They were protesting the fact that a U.S. census had been taken on the island that year, recording a population of 28, down four since 1950.

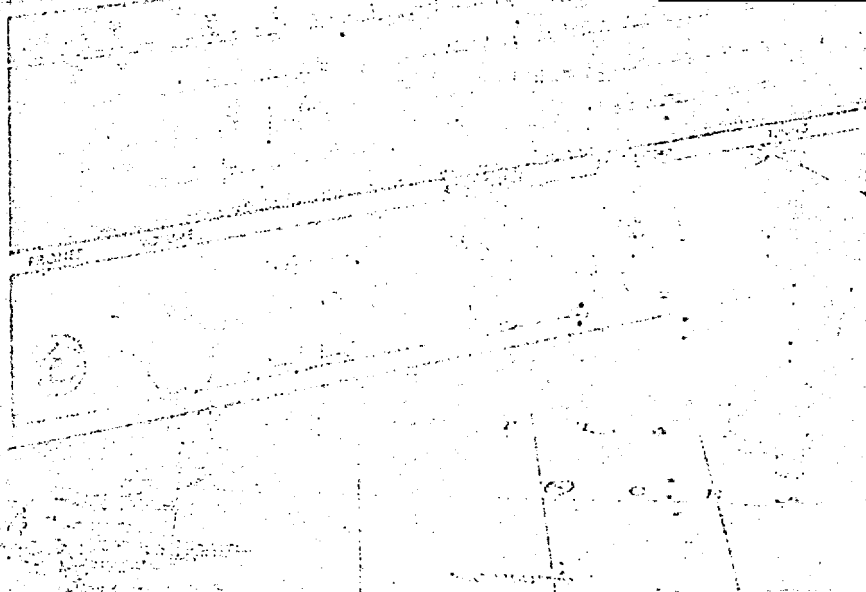
A few months later Honduras protested in the United Nations, claiming that "Historically, geographically and juridically" the island belonged to it.

After 10 years of diplomatic bickering, the United States has now recognized Honduras' claim and Finch will make it all official in Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, Monday.

Finch will be in Honduras for only a few hours, arriving in the morning from Brazil and leaving in the evening for Mexico. He will return here on Thanksgiving Day after an 11-day tour of six Latin American countries.

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*Available*

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Hallicrafters' four-band Star Quest is typical of modern receivers you might use for shortwave. It comes assembled for about \$60.

## HOW TO ENJOY

Worldwide Adventures  
on the Airwaves

Via shortwave, you can bring radio's pirates, bootleggers, even spies into your home

By LEN BUCKWALTER

Captain Kidd, Dutch Schultz, and Benedict Arnold are dead, you say? Sure, but the likes of these old scoundrels are still alive and well on the international airwaves. Their weapons are powerful transmitters which often broadcast on a global scale. Their escapades trouble government officials. But the blackguards can be the delight of shortwave listeners.

You don't need a pile of electronic gear to listen in. You can enjoy the pastime with a simple portable that captures strong signals on nothing more than a telescoping whip sticking out of the case. The seasoned hobbyist, though, generally strings an outdoor antenna (a wire 20 to 100 feet long) or goes in for more expen-

sive receiving equipment with special accessories for cutting interference.

The low-cost portable will pick up powerful international broadcasters like BBC, Radio Moscow, and Japan's NHK; the spicier stations may call for a more sensitive instrument.

But whatever your choice, once you have your receiver you can join thousands of fellow listeners who attempt to eavesdrop on rogue broadcasters.

One character is the "pirate," who sails a radio station just outside the 12-mile territorial limit of a country,

*Continued*

Shortwave stations you may hear			
Frequency (mhz)	Station	Affiliation	Listener Area
3.500, 4.365	Unknown	CIA	S.E. Asia
2.440, 3.900, 4.365	Radio Liberation Army	Viet Cong	S.E. Asia
11.697, 9.555	Pei-Kel-Iran	Radio Sofia (Bulgaria)	Middle East
9.555, 11.410	Kiss Me Honey (music jammer)	Radio Baghdad	Middle East
8.340	Radio Portugal Libre	Radio Moscow	North America
13.200, 13.300, 15.000, 15.100	Radio Euzkadi	Basque Region of Spain	Europe, N. America
17.700, 6.950, 7.050	Radio Espana Independiente	Radio Moscow	Europe
1.405, 7.365	Radio Liberdade, LaVoz Anti-Com		South, Central America
9.300, 11.565, 15.020	Ministres de America	Unknown	
1.157, 6.050	Radio Americas	CIA	Central, South America
6.135	Radio Havana	Cuba	Central, South America, S.E. Asia
10.030, 10.015	Radio of S. Vietnam	Viet Cong	
7.545	Free Transmitters of Czechoslovakia		Europe, North America

*continued*